

Human Resources Motivation in a Utility Company

A Case Study

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Abstract

In organizations, the managerial workers tend to influence their subordinates in aligning their own motivation with the needs of the organization. Motivating employees begins with the way to influence worker's behavior. The understanding of this phenomenon is conducive to the results expected by the organizations and the workers. The thrust of this article is to utilize a descriptive survey approach to depict the scope of a certain numbers of factors that stimulate employees in the workplace. Data was collected from a Utility Company in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. There were 143 participants and 120 (85 males and 35 females) out of this number participated in the research. This represents an 83.91% response.

The results of this paper are noteworthy within acceptable limits as they indicate that interesting work; good pay; full appreciation of work done and job security are outstanding drivers for employee motivation.

Field of Research: Human Resource Management

1. Introduction

Motivation is one of the easiest concepts to understand, yet one of the most difficult to implement. Employees have different particular traits, habits that make them unique. Each employee has different needs and wants and what stimulates the human resources (HR) significantly depends on the context in which those HR work; Often, the difference between successful companies and mediocre companies is that employees in successful organizations are motivated. They are enthusiastic about the company and its services. In today's labor market, companies in Cote d'Ivoire need to meet a new set of employee expectations. Money is no longer the sole motivator for choosing a company and for the employee to stay with the employer.

There are various definitions about motivation. However, motivation is highlighted in this paper as that the process that accounts for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal (Peter, 1954) and organizational goals as well.

The Research Aims

The aims of this research inquiry were to:

- Depict the scope of certain factors in stimulating human resources (HR) at a Utility Company in Abidjan (Cote d'Ivoire).

- Portray by order of importance or preference the ensuing factors: Job Security; Sympathetic help with personal problems; Personal loyalty to employees; Interesting work; Good working conditions; Tactful discipline; Good wages; Promotions and growth in the organization; Feeling of being in on things; Full appreciation of work done.
- Use the different theories of motivation utilized in this study to scrutinize relevant findings.

Based on the research aims and the factors taken from (Kovach, 1995), the researcher will invite the respondents to state by order of preference in terms of motivational values, that is, the different factors that stimulate them most while doing their work. Also, this paper will utilize the different motivation theories from our literature review to understand how things are the way that they are.

2. Literature Review

There is a myriad of literature on motivation. Motivating employees begins with the way to influence worker's behavior. The understanding of this phenomenon is conducive to the results expected by the organization and the workers. Therefore, the Hawthorne Studies that began the human relations approach to management, whereby the needs and motivation of employees become the primary focus of managers (Bedeian, 1993) is of a great concern in the understanding of the elements that stimulate workers in a given organization. Despite the various numbers of motivation theories that exist, this study will only focus on four (4) motivation theories.

2.1. Maslow's Theories of Motivation

The most well-known theory of motivation is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of Needs (Caroll and Tosi, 1973). Maslow's hierarchy of needs hypothesizes that within every human being there is a hierarchy of five needs (physiological; safety; social; esteem; self-actualization). Maslow's hierarchy of needs is also classified in two types of orders (Higher-order needs and Lower-order needs). The higher-order needs comprise self-actualization need, esteem need, and social need whereas the lower-order needs is composed of safety need and physiological need. As each of those needs become substantially satisfied, the next need becomes dominant.

From Maslow's theory, it is perceived that depending on the need-level of a worker, certain rewards will or will not work for him or her. A worker who is at the basic level will probably care more for an extra Francs CFA (Ivorian local currency) per hour than an expensive company present, while a worker who is already settled with regards to basic needs, security, safety, and social contacts, may care more for a prestigious title or a wonderful award complete with the entire ceremony that goes along with it.

2.2. Adams' Theory of Motivation: The Equity Theory

The equity theory explains how people develop perceptions of fairness in the distribution and exchange of resources. It states that employees compare their situation with others. Adams (1965) admits that when a worker finds himself/herself in a situation of inequity, he/she becomes unsatisfied and will mobilize all his/her energy to reduce those inequities through thoughts or behavior. The Adams' Equity Theory model therefore extends beyond the individual self, and

incorporates influence and comparison of other people's situations - for example colleagues and friends - in forming a comparative view and awareness of Equity, which commonly manifests as a sense of what is fair. When people feel fairly or advantageously treated they are more likely to be motivated; when they feel unfairly treated they are highly prone to feelings of disaffection and demotivation. The way that people measure this sense of fairness is at the heart of Equity Theory. Equity, and thereby the motivational situation we might seek to assess using the model, is not dependent on the extent to which a person believes reward exceeds effort, nor even necessarily on the belief that reward exceeds effort at all. Rather, Equity, and the sense of fairness which commonly underpins motivation, is dependent on the comparison a person makes between his or her reward/investment ratio with the ratio enjoyed (or suffered) by others considered to be in a similar situation.

2.3. Vroom's Theory of Motivation

Vroom's theory is based on the belief that employee effort will lead to performance and performance will lead to rewards (Vroom, 1964). Rewards may be either positive or negative. The more positive the reward the more likely the employee will be highly motivated. Conversely, the more negative the reward the less likely the employee will be motivated.

2.4. Herzberg's Theories of Motivation

Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory emphasizes that there are different issues at stake when we talk about job satisfaction than when we talk about job dissatisfaction. That means so much as that you can decrease a worker's job dissatisfaction and still not have achieved an increase in his or her job satisfaction.

Herzberg's work categorized motivation into two factors: motivators and hygiene (Herzberg et al., 1959). Motivator or intrinsic factors, such as achievement and recognition, produce job satisfaction. Hygiene or extrinsic factors, such as pay and job security, produce job dissatisfaction

3. Research Methods

For the objective of this current study, a descriptive survey approach was used. Data was gathered at a utility company in Cote d'Ivoire over a period of one month. The purpose of this study and the questionnaires were thoroughly explained to the participants. There were 143 participants and 120 (85 males and 35 females) out of this number participated in the research. This represents an 83.91% response. Non response (16.08%) from a few is mainly due to the workers being on leave for sickness at the time of data collection. The participants were instructed to use a scale of one (1) to ten (10); one being of the most important and ten being the least important to rank the importance of the ten factors (indicated in the introductory section) that motivated them in doing their work. This is similar to the likert scale used by James (2000).

4. Findings and Discussions

Among the participants are 85 are males and 35 are females (Figure 1).The findings from the study are presented in the figure 2. Figure 2 below depicts the results of the questionnaires in which the participants were asked to rank the importance of the ten factors (F), (indicated earlier in the research aims) taken from Kovach (1995) that motivated them in doing their work.

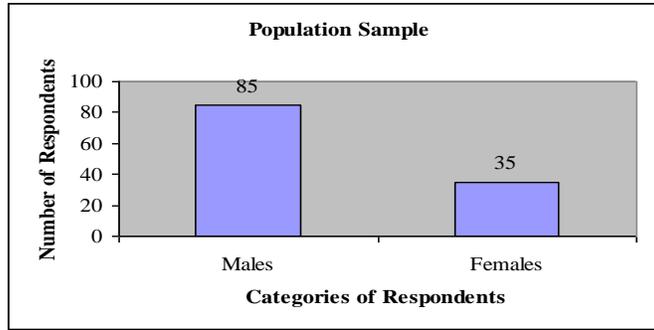


Figure 1: Population Sample

The figure 2 highlights that 12.50% of the respondents (11 males (M) and 4 females (F)) indicated their preference to job security; 0.83% (1 M and 0 F) to “sympathetic help with personal problems”; 5.00% (4 M and 2 F) to “personal loyalty to employees”; 20.83 % (17 M and 8 F) to “interesting work”; 11.67% (10 M and 4 F) to “good working conditions”; 2.50% (2 M and 1 F) to “tactful discipline”; 16.67% (14 M and 6 F) to “good wages”; 8.33% (7 M and 3 F) to “promotions and growth in the organization”; 6.67% (6 M and 2 F) to “feeling of being in on things”; and 15% (13 M and 5 F) to “full appreciation of work done”.

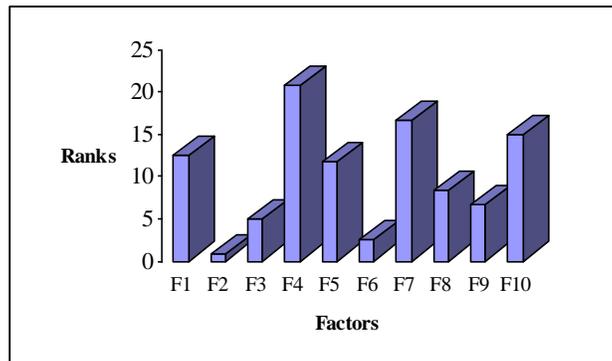


Figure 2: Motivational Factors Ranked By Order of Importance
By Respondents in doing their Work

Our findings highlight that 20.83% of the respondents ranked the variable “interesting work” as the first motivational factor; 16.67% for the variable “good wages” which makes this factor, the second ranked motivational factor. The third and fourth motivational factors are respectively the variables “full appreciation of work done” with 15% of responses and “job security” with 12.50% of score. To better understand the phenomenon under study, the extensive review of literature was of a great importance. Relating those findings to the Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs (1970), the researcher noticed that the first ranked motivational factor by our respondents, that is, “interesting work” corresponds to Maslow’s higher-order needs as “interesting work” corresponds to the variable “self-actualization”, the drive to become what the employees are capable of becoming which includes growth; achievement of one’s potential; self-fulfillment.

The lower-order need (job security in our study) is the second ranked motivational factor. As that need is satisfied externally, it corresponds to the physiological needs of Maslow's theory. The third and the fourth ranked motivational factors correspond to the higher-order needs (Maslow's) and are factors which are satisfied internally. Those factors are the ensuing variables respectively: "full appreciation of work done" corresponding to the variable "esteem factor" and the security of employment, that is, the variable "job security" corresponding to the safety factor in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The second ranked motivational factor in our sample is the physiological needs, that is, the variable "good wages" with (16.67%). This implies that, after the managerial workers of the utility company, the company under study substantially satisfy the following: interesting work; job security; full appreciation of work done, they (managers) can then address the issue of the variable "good wages" as next step; that is, move up to the second dominant issues in terms of understanding and motivating workers. If they want to motivate their employees, they (managerial workers) need to understand what level of the hierarchy those employees are currently on and therefore focus on satisfying those needs at or above that level.

In this research, the variable "full appreciation of work done" (15%) was ranked as the third highest motivational factor by the respondents. An explanation of this response requires that the researcher use a motivational theory from the literature review to state the reason why. Thus, according to Adam's theory of motivation (1965), when a human resource (HR) finds himself/herself in a situation of inequity, he/she becomes unsatisfied and will mobilize all his/her energy to reduce those inequities through thoughts or behavior. In relation to the response given by the respondents as for the variable about "the full appreciation of work done" as the third highest motivational factor, we noticed during our investigation that HR in the utility company resorts who believes that the appreciation of work done is not effective, this HR may not make use of the resource that he/she possess to work toward the goals and objectives of the company as this brings him/her lack of dedication, that is, motivation. However, the lack of appreciation of from the managerial workers as for the work done by non-managerial workers highlights that the human recourses in the utility company feel that there is a situation of inequity that needs to be addressed. Therefore, it would not be surprising to see that workers will mobilize their energy to restore equity. And the restoration of that equity will be done using various ways: The human resources in the utility company who feel that their work is not appreciated may not value the work of their colleagues and may not work toward the utility's goals and objectives.

The researcher then uses Herzberg's two-factor theory for the explanation of the following variables: "interesting work" and "good wages". The first variable (20.83%) was ranked as the first highest motivational factor and the second one (16.67%) as the second highest ranked motivational factor. As Herzberg classified his theory into two factors (motivator factor and hygiene factor), the variable ranked as being the first highest motivational factor (interesting work) is the motivator factor and the hygiene factor is the second ranked highest motivational factor (good wages) in this current study. Herzberg et al. (1959) posit that to the degree that motivators are effective in a job, motivation will occur. The absence of motivators does not lead to job dissatisfaction. They also hold that the degree that hygiene factors are absent from a job, dissatisfaction will occur. The presence of hygiene factors prevents dissatisfaction but does not lead to satisfaction. In this current study, the motivator, that is the first highest ranked variable (interesting work) for the human resources in the utility company will not lead to dissatisfaction. What may lead to dissatisfaction is the wages issue. As a matter of this fact, if employees from the utility company receive "insignificant" (lower) wages which is the hygiene factor; this will

be conducive to job dissatisfaction if they find the wages are not realistic. Human resources will be motivated when they are doing interesting work but they will not be essentially be motivated by significant recompense (salary).

5. Conclusion

The objective of the research is to ask participants to state by order of preference ten motivational factors taken from Kovach (1995) to gauge the different factors that stimulate them most while doing their work. The respondents (120 out of 143) ranked the ten motivational factors by order of importance as follows: (1) Interesting work; (2) Good wages; (3) Full appreciation of work done; (4) Job security; (5) Good working conditions; (6) Promotions and growth in the organization; (7) Feeling of being in on things; (8) Personal loyalty to employees; (9) Tactful discipline; and (10) Sympathetic help with personal problems. The findings of this research suggest that in the Ivorian setting, the thing that stimulates the human resources (HR) significantly depends on the context in which those HR work; that good wages (ranked second in our findings), that is, money is not the most significant motivational factor for HR to do their work. The standpoint of Maslow's motivation theory is that lower level motivational factors need to be satisfied before moving up to the next level of motivational factors. Our findings are at variance with what Maslow's highlights because the ranges of motivational factors are varied in this current research.

The implications of those findings are that, for the employees to be committed and work towards the goals and objectives of the company to witness performance and be competitive, managerial workers first need to satisfy the following: interesting work (self-actualization); job security (safety needs); full appreciation of work done (social; esteem needs). They (interesting needs; job security; full appreciation of work done) need to be significantly fulfilled. Though this study highlights significant contributions to the field of human resource management, there are limitations to the study. The use of quantitative patterns in prospective study might bring about a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon under study. Gathering data was done from a utility company from 120 respondents only. There should be a collection of data from various companies from different regions in Cote d'Ivoire to obtain important data for a constructive conclusion drawing.

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